**CARING FOR YOUR KITTEN**

**Bringing the kitten home**

Moving to a new home is very stressful for a kitten. Give it reassurance and time to adjust to the new surroundings before making introductions to any other animals in the household. Make sure all the doors and windows are closed and that there is a guard in front of the fireplace (a dark, quiet chimney can be very inviting to a nervous kitten). Make sure that the kitten knows where the bed, litter tray and food bowls are. *(1)*

The kitten’s bed should be a refuge to retreat to if things become too stressful. It needs to be warm, dry, comfortable and draught free. There are many types of bed to choose from or you can put some warm bedding inside a strong dry cardboard box with a hole cut in the side. Putting it in a warm secure corner (near a radiator in the winter) will make it welcoming and the kitten feel secure. On the first few nights a warm water bottle under a blanket may help to compensate for the absence of the kitten's mother or littermates. *(2)*

**Introducing other pets and children**

Introduction to other household residents should be gradual, gentle and very quiet. Excited children can easily injure a kitten unintentionally so always supervise play and do not allow the kitten to be picked up unnecessarily. Children should be encouraged to sit on the floor and wait for the kitten to explore them. Make sure that the kitten is allowed to stop playing when it wants to and is not treated like a toy. Kittens, like many young animals, will need a lot of sleep and should be allowed time to rest. *(3)*

Introducing a kitten to a dog or cat needs to be undertaken carefully to avoid conflict. A bad experience can be difficult to overcome. If you have a large mesh pen in which the kitten can sit safely while the resident cat or dog can gradually get used to it, this is an ideal way to make introductions. Some dogs, especially those not used to cats or of an excitable or aggressive disposition, need extra special care for introductions. They should be kept as calm as possible on the lead and made to sit quietly. The new kitten should be given a safe position in the room and allowed to get used to the dog and approach if it wants. This may take quite some time and requires patience and rewards for the dog if it behaves well. *(4)*

When you first take a kitten home feed it on the same food it has been used to. A sudden change of diet combined with the stress of adapting to a new home can cause stomach upsets and diarrhoea. If you want to change the diet, do so gradually by mixing it with the kitten's usual food. Kittens have very small stomachs and have to be fed little and often, like babies. *(5)*

There are foods which have been specially formulated for kittens because they have different nutritional needs to the fully grown cat. Read and follow the feeding instructions carefully. If the food is marked 'complete' it contains everything the kitten needs to stay healthy. If it is marked 'complementary' it does not supply all the kitten needs and should be fed with other foods. *(6)*

Do not give your kitten cow's milk as it can cause diarrhoea. If you wish to feed milk use one that is specially formulated for cats. Diarrhoea that persists for more than 24 hours requires veterinary attention. Fresh drinking water should be available at all times. *(7)*

**Going outside**

Your kitten should not be allowed outside until at least a week after it has finished its first course of vaccinations at about 13 - 14 weeks old (depending on the vaccine). Once it is fully vaccinated and has become used to life in your house, you can start to let your kitten go outside. Choose a dry day (if possible) and a quiet time and accompany your kitten outside, allowing it to explore the new environment. Continue to accompany the kitten until it is used to your garden and can find its way back to the house without difficulty. It is best not to leave your kitten outside alone until it is 6 months old. *(8)*

**‘FREE KITTENS’** *Jim Willis*

The sign was hand-lettered and read “FREE KITTENS.” It appeared there two or three times a year, sometimes spelled this way, sometimes that, but the message was always the same. *(1)*

In a corner of the farmhouse back porch was a torn cardboard box with a dirty towel inside, on which huddled a handful of kittens of different colors, mewing and blinking and waiting for their mama to return from hunting in the fields. The mother cat managed to show them enough interest for the first few weeks, but after having two or three litters per year, she was worn out and her milk barely lasted long enough for her babies to survive. *(2)*

One by one, people showed up over the next several days and each took a kitten. Before they left the farmer’s wife always said the same thing, “You make sure you give that one a good home - I've become very attached to that one.” *(3)*

One by one the kittens and their new people drove down the long driveway and past the sign on the mailbox post, “FREE KITTENS.” *(4)*

The ginger girl kitten was the first to be picked. Her four-year-old owner loved her very much, but the little boy accidentally injured the kitten's shoulder by picking her up the wrong way, tossing her up in the air and catching her. Although the kitten meowed piteously, the boy thought she was enjoying the game and continued it for ages. The boy couldn't be blamed really - no adult had shown him the proper way to handle a kitten. He had named the kitten “Ginger” and was very sad a few weeks later when his older brother and his friends were playing ‘Chase’ in the living room and one of them sat on the kitten. *(5)*

The solid white boy kitten with blue eyes was the next to leave with a couple by the name of Gantry. Even before they got into their car, they announced the kitten’s name would be ‘Snowball.’ Unfortunately, he never learned his name. After the first few days, the couple got bored with him and paid him so little attention they failed to realise Snowball was deaf. On his first excursion outside he was run over in the driveway and buried under a rosebush. *(6)*

Snowball’s brother, a beautiful red tabby, was more fortunate being ‘adopted’ by an elderly lady named Jemima. So thrilled was she by the handsome little fellow that she immediately took ‘Erik’ round to visit all her neighbours. Though terrified by some of the cats and dogs he met, Erik was treated like a little prince. Sadly his good fortunate did not last, for Jemima had ignored the need to have him vaccinated – “but he looked so health and happy,” she explained. Unable to meet the expenses of having Erik treated by the local vet., she allowed Nature to take its course, and Erik passed away in his sleep. *(7)*

The pitch-black male kitten grew up to be a fine example of a tomcat. However, the man who’d purchased him and named him ‘Killer’ moved home after a year and abandoned Killer to his own devices. The tomcat spent a few happy (more-or-less) months roaming the neighbourhood, slaughtering small birds and defending his territory until one day he was cornered by another ‘Killer’ – a Rottweiler who lived up to his name. To his credit, Killer (the cat) put up a fierce fight until the inevitable. *(8)*

A pretty woman, Bella by name, driving a white van, took the last two kittens, a gray boy and a brown tiger-striped girl. She promised they would always stay together. She sold them for fifteen pounds each to a laboratory. To this day, they are still together...in a jar of alcohol. *(9)*

For whatever reason - because Heaven is in a different time zone, or because not even cat souls can be trusted to travel in a straight line without meandering - all the kittens arrived at Heaven's Gate simultaneously. They batted and licked each other in glee, romped for awhile, and then solemnly marched through the gate, right past a sign lettered in gold:

### http://www.humanesociety.org/assets/images/270x224/publications/all_animals/2011/mayjune-2011/cat_meowing.jpgCat-Meowing (and what it means)

Cats do most of their meowing when they want something but they do occasionally meow to say hello. However, there may be times when a cat starts meowing more or less constantly, and that can be quite a headache as much for you as for the cat. Most cats who constantly meow are doing so because they're trying to tell you something. Please bear in mind that your cat doesn't meow just to annoy you and the quicker you can figure out the reasons for the noise, the quicker it will stop. Try some of these. *(1)*

Firstly, make sure that your cat isn't meowing due to an illness or medical problem. Cats do meow to communicate, not just to demand things, so illness should be ruled out first of all. If there’s no sign of illness, check these out. *(2)*

* **Feed on a regular basis**. Try feeding your cat at set times/regular intervals so they can anticipate when they're next going to eat. You can also try leaving down the dry cat food/biscuits so that your cat can nibble whenever they get hungry. However, if your cat has a tendency to over-eat, this may not be wise. *(3)*
* **Install a cat flap**. Most cats can never make up their minds if they want to be in or outside. My cat is in heaven during the summer when I can leave the back door open and he can wander in and out at much as he pleases. If your cat is always in and out, a cat flap is a great option. They're fairly cheap and easy to install and you buy ones which have magnets on them so only YOUR cat can get in; otherwise you can be sure of lots of unwelcome visitors. *(4)*
* **Play**. Some cats meow a lot because they want some attention and affection. Stroke and play with your cat often to keep them from feeling lonely or neglected. A bored cat is not a happy cat. *(5)*
* **Discipline**. Don't let your cat drive you round the bend with excessive meowing - take charge. You can either ignore them which will eventually make them stop if you don't give in (very hard to do!) or you can try the old favourites of a squirt with a water spray or a firm 'NO' and a clap of the hands. Eventually your kitty will realise that constant meowing will get them nowhere. Please ensure you remember to praise your cat and give extra attention to them when they're not meowing. *(6)*
* **Try asking.** And, if all else fails, try asking him what’s up. *(7)*